

Amendments

In the Claims:

1. (Previously presented) A method of prioritizing calls connected to an automated telephone system comprising the steps of:

connecting a plurality of calls to said automated telephone system;

obtaining caller identifying information from each of said connected calls;

placing each of said connected calls on hold;

searching a customer database and identifying a customer database record corresponding to the caller identifying information for each connected call, said identified customer database records including information pertinent about a previous interaction with said customer;

retrieving information from said identified customer database records that is relevant to call prioritization;

creating a call record for each connected call, each call record including said caller identifying information and said retrieved call prioritizing information;

inserting each created call record into a hold queue based on at least said retrieved call prioritizing information, prioritizing said plurality of calls in said hold queue; and directing a connected call from said plurality of prioritized calls in said hold queue to an available agent.

2. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein each said connected call comprises an incoming telephone call placed by an interested caller to said automated telephone system.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of selecting a connected call to direct to an available agent comprises;

comparing the retrieved call prioritizing information stored in each call record with at least one predetermined prioritization attribute;

arranging the call records in the hold queue according to the prioritizing information comparison; and automatically directing a connected call that enjoys a

highest priority position in said hold queue arrangement to an available agent.

5. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of obtaining caller identifying information comprises using an automatic number identification (ANI) system to obtain a telephone number from which the connected call is placed.

6. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of obtaining caller identifying information comprises using an integrated voice response (IVR) system to obtain said caller identifying information directly from a connected caller.

7. (Previously presented) A hold queue prioritizing system comprising:

an automated telephone system;

a call receiver/director for connecting a plurality of calls to said automated telephone system;

a customer database including a plurality of database records, each database record including caller identifying information and information relevant to call prioritization based on a previous interaction with said customer;

a means for obtaining identifying information from each of said plurality of calls connected to said automated telephone system;

at least one hold queue coupled to said call receiver/director, said at least one hold queue for holding call records related to said plurality of connected calls;

a plurality of call center agent terminals coupled to said automated telephone system for handling said connected calls; and

a hold queue prioritizer responsive to said caller identifying information from each of said plurality of calls connected to said automated telephone system, for retrieving at

least a portion of said call prioritizing information stored in each said database record corresponding to each connected call, prioritizing said plurality of calls in said hold queue based on at least said retrieved call prioritizing information, and for selecting a connected call to direct from said plurality of prioritized calls in said hold queue.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Previously presented) The hold queue prioritizing system as claimed in claim 7, wherein said displayed call prioritizing information comprises raw customer information retrieved from each said customer database record.

10. (Previously presented) The hold queue prioritizing system as claimed in claim 7, wherein said displayed prioritizing information comprises a call priority score derived by said hold queue prioritizer responsive to said call prioritizing information retrieved from each said customer database record.

11. (Original) The hold queue prioritizing system as claimed

in claim 10, wherein said displayed call priority score is an absolute call priority score.

12. (Original) The hold queue prioritizing system as claimed in claim 10, wherein said displayed call priority score is a relative call priority score.

13. (Original) The hold queue prioritizing system as claimed in claim 7, wherein said means for obtaining caller identifying information comprises an automatic number identification (ANI) system.

14. (Original) The hold queue prioritizing system as claimed in claim 7, wherein said means for obtaining caller identifying information comprises an integrated voice response (IVR) system.

15. (Previously presented) A system for prioritizing calls on hold and connected to an automated telephone system comprising:

    a call receiver/director for receiving a plurality of calls connected to said automated telephone system and for directing said plurality of connected calls to a plurality of agent terminals coupled to said call receiver/director;

    a customer database, including customer database records including caller identifying information and call prioritizing information based on a previous interaction with said customer;

    at least one hold queue; and

    a hold queue prioritizer, coupled to said call receiver/director, said hold queue prioritizer including:

        a means for obtaining caller identifying information from each of said plurality of connected calls;

        a means responsive to said obtained caller identifying information, for searching said customer database to identifying customer database records

        corresponding to said obtained caller identifying information for each of said plurality of connected calls, and retrieving said call prioritizing information from each of said identified customer

database records;

a means for creating a call record for each of said plurality of connected calls, each call record including said caller identifying information and said call prioritizing information;

a means for prioritizing said plurality of calls in said hold queue based on at least said retrieved call prioritizing information, and

a means for selecting a connected call from said prioritized hold queue to direct to an available agent based on said call prioritizing information.

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Original) The system for prioritizing calls on hold and connected to an automated telephone system as claimed in claim 15, wherein said means for selecting a call to direct to an available agent comprises a means for automatically directing a connected call to an available agent based on the call prioritizing information stored in said plurality of call records in said hold queue.

18. (Original) The system for prioritizing calls on hold and connected to an automated telephone system as claimed in claim 15, wherein said call prioritizing information corresponding to each said connected call comprises raw information retrieved from each said customer database record.

19. (Original) The system for prioritizing calls on hold and connected to an automated telephone system as claimed in claim 15, wherein said call prioritizing information corresponding to each said connected call comprises a call priority score derived by said hold queue prioritizer responsive to said retrieved call prioritizing information for each said connected call.

20. (Previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of directing an available agent comprises displaying a list of call records stored in said hold queue, including said caller identifying information and said call prioritizing information for each said connected call on at least one available agent display and manually selecting a connected call to direct to said available agent.

21. (Previously presented) The hold queue prioritizing system as claimed in claim 7, wherein said hold queue prioritizer comprises a hold queue call record display, displayed on at least one of said plurality of agent terminals, said call record display including caller identifying information and call prioritizing information for each call record in said hold queue and a means for manually directing a call to an available agent based on said displayed connected call information.

22. (Previously presented) The system for prioritizing calls on hold and connected to an automated telephone system as claimed in claim 15, wherein said means for selecting a call to direct to an available agent comprises an on hold call record display for displaying said plurality of call records stored in said hold queue, said displayed call records including caller identifying information and call prioritizing information and a means for allowing an available agent to manually select a connected call to direct to said available agent based on said displayed call prioritizing information.

23. (Canceled)

24. (New) A method of prioritizing calls connected to an automated telephone system comprising the steps of:

connecting a call of a customer to said automated telephone system;

obtaining caller identifying information from said connected call;

placing said connected call on hold;

searching a customer database and identifying a customer database record corresponding to the caller identifying information for said connected call, said identified customer database record including information pertinent about a previous interaction with said customer;

retrieving information from said identified customer database record that is relevant to call prioritization of the said connected call associated with said customer;

creating a call record for said connected call, said call record including said caller identifying information and said retrieved call prioritizing information of said connected call associated with said identified customer;

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inserting said created call record into a hold queue  
based on at least said retrieved call prioritizing information of  
said connected call associated with said identified customer;

prioritizing said plurality of calls in said hold queue;  
and

directing said connected call from said plurality of  
prioritized calls in said hold queue to an available agent.